



LANGUAGE AND CULTURE BULLETIN

Information and Tips from The Multilingual and Multicultural Center - Donald L. Bouchard

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ASSISTING ELLs IN THE CLASSROOM

Integrating Language Use for Content Learning

Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are the language domains of use in learning. English Language Learners (ELLs), *no matter what level of language proficiency or learning context*, need consistent practice using listening, speaking, reading, and writing as the means for adding depth to their content learning. The ability to hear and understand clearly what is spoken; to read and comprehend an author's presentation; to talk about and discuss with meaning and accuracy about the subject; and to coherently and accurately express thoughts in writing are all aspects of academic language use that can demonstrate content mastery. This *Bulletin* briefly examines the dimensions of integrated language use and offers a variety of activities for content language practice.

DIMENSIONS OF INTEGRATED LANGUAGE USE: FOCUS ON MEANING AND FORM

Focus on meaning. ELLs demonstrate their knowledge in integrated language use through cognitive functioning in the language. This functional is hierarchical: the more language variety, vocabulary, and structural range of language use, the

greater the depth and accuracy for demonstrating learning. *ELLs need practice in integrated language use through tasks in order to develop flexibility and automaticity of language range, increase in word use, and familiarity with language forms. This aids in acquiring accurate, native-like academic proficiency.* Limited English proficient ELLs can only engage in minimal identification, description, comparison, and sequencing tasks; intermediate ELLs are able to add on inferencing and justification tasks; and advanced learners can further engage in solving problems, synthesis, and evaluation tasks.

Focus on form. Integrated language use can help ELLs directly focus on vocabulary and language structure through specific activities. Engaging in content-related tasks through listening, speaking, reading, and writing helps ELLs to embed their ability to use English with greater flexibility and accuracy. *Front-loading language* by paying direct attention to forms of words (e.g., nouns, verb, adverbs, etc.), complex sentences to identify the main verb(s) (i.e., action), and other unusual language features are examples of focus on form with integrated language use.

ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE INTEGRATED LISTENING, SPEAKING, READING AND WRITING PRACTICE.

The following activities foster integrated language use with a focus on meaning and form:

1. **Anticipation Guide.** Prior to a reading or delivering a content presentation, create 4-6 true/false statements about the information the students will read. Students in pairs *read and discuss* the statements; individually *read* the passage; *discuss* the reading; and *write* a sentence or paragraph summary.

NOTE: Pay attention to the simplicity and/or complexity of the true/false statements in relation to the students' proficiency levels; preteach key vocabulary; for the written summary, use a sentence starter to elicit specific language forms.

2. **Reverse Brainstorming.** With a selected content reading, encourage students to *talk about* familiar words, language features, and aspects of the topic and *write* them in columns with those headings; have students then *read* the passage; *discuss* and write any additional words, language features, and aspects of the topic; and finally *write* a statement summarizing the learning.

NOTE: Limit the length of reading passage so students will not feel overwhelmed; encourage a focus on word forms (nouns, adjectives, etc.); focus on key vocabulary; and use sentence starters to elicit specific language forms in the written summary.

3. **What 4.** This activity has students activate their thinking before reading a text or a reading passage. Individual students each have a sheet of paper having a visual with 4 quadrants. In each quadrant write one of the following - "what I see"; "what I know"; "what I think"; "what it says". Individually or in small groups, have students examine the text and in the "What I see" quadrant, *talk about*, then *write about* any pictures, sections, topic

headings, etc. they observe; what they know about the topic in the "what I know" quadrant; opinions in the "what I think" quadrant; and, while reading, significant learnings in the "what it says" quadrant. NOTE: Read the passage aloud to students before they engage in this activity.

4. **REAP.** Similar to "What 4", with REAP students in small groups use a paper with a box visual having 4 quadrants. An "R: (reads), an "E" (encode), an "A" (annotate) and an "R" is placed in each of the quadrants. Students individually *read* the content passage, then *discuss* what it is about and *write* a summary in "R"; *discuss* then *write about the gist of the reading* in "E"; *discuss* and *write* the main ideas in "A"; and *discuss* and *write about* personal connections in "P".

5. **Skimming.** For lengthier readings this activity helps students to achieve a global understanding of the reading before engaging in a more focused reading of the text. In pairs, have students *discuss* and *write* circled key words or headings; underline first sentences of every paragraph; *write* nouns and verbs found in the first and last paragraphs; and *write* a summary statement. Pose questions to be *discussed* and *written out* from the first sentences in each paragraph and/or have students identify the paragraph where the answer can be found.

These activities are examples of what ELLs and other students can do to engage in integrated language use. By any combination of listening, reading, speaking, and writing, learners will work toward embedding their knowledge of content and use of language around the content.

SOURCE:

Allen, Janet (2004). Tools for Teaching Content Literacy. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.

Zukowski/Faust, "Steps to Success for Academic Readers." ESL Magazine Sept./Oct. 2002.